JEWISH FAIRY TALES & FABLES

AUNT NAOMI

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BY

AUNT NAOMI

JEWISH FAIRY TALES AND FABLES

Jewish Fairy Tales and Fables

By AUNT NAOMI, pseud.

Landa, Gertrude

ILLUSTRATED BY

E. STRELLETT AND J. MARKS

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Dedication.

TO MY LITTLE DAUGHTER,
RUTH.

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FOLKLORE

Preface

LL the peoples of the world have their fairy tales and fables, their legends and their folk-lore, but perhaps no literature is richer in this respect than that of the Jews. Hebrew lore has, indeed, been a source of inspiration to the writers of many lands for ages, and yet Jewish children of to-day have very little opportunity to read the beautiful stories to be found in the Talmud and the Midrash, those vast treasuries of Hebrew learning.

It is in the hope of meeting this want that I have written these fairy tales and fables. Mostly they are based on parables of the Talmud and the Midrash, and these, although they have been entirely re-written in a manner best suited for children, have been treated

with the greatest possible respect. The central allegory of each story has been left unsullied to convey the beautiful moral as intended by the great Rabbis who originally invented them for the interest of their pupils.

A few of the stories are almost entirely original, chiefly "The Ragged Pedlar," which is inspired by an old Rabbinic saying, and "The Enchanted Donkey" and "Honeim's Magic Shoes," which are based on Oriental legends.

AUNT NAOMI.

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THE SLAVE WHO BECAME A KING.

The Slave who became a King

ADAM was the name of a slave whose master was one of the kindest that ever lived. He was very anxious to make his slave happy.

"Adam," he said, one day, "although thou art a slave, and it rests with me to do with thee what I will, I never forget that thou art a man, made in the same likeness as I, thy master. Has it ever occurred to thee that thou art a man, an ordinary man, apart from being a slave?"

The slave merely bowed.

"I intend to give thee thy freedom," said his master, "that thou mayest be a true man."

"It is for thee to do with me as thou wilt," replied Adam. "If it so seems to thee that I shall be a true man by my freedom, then shall I be pleased to receive it from thee. Thy will is mine."

"Nay, not so," answered his master kindly. "It is my desire that thou shouldst use thy will and thy judgment as thy own. I give thee thy freedom to make the best use of it. But I will give thee more than freedom. Thou shalt have riches. I will give thee a shipload of varied merchandise. Sail with it to different lands, dispose it well, and what thou receivest in payment shall be thine to enjoy as thou thinkest fit. It will rest entirely with thee to make thy journeys profitable. Fare thee well."

"I thank thee, noble master," replied the slave reverently. "It shall indeed be my aim to prove that I am a man fashioned in the likeness of my master."

The ship which his master gave him was stored with goods of every description, and as Adam stood on the deck waving farewell to his master, he felt happy. Yet there was a touch of sadness in his joy, for he realized that his

wealth brought great responsibilities with it, and that to dispose of his wares successfully and to the best advantage, he would have to be careful.

For two or three days all went well, and his ship sailed gallantly before a favourable breeze. But then a mighty storm arose. Dark masses of cloud hid the bright heavens, the wind in great fury lashed the waters into foam, the sails were ripped from the masts, and the vessel was borne rapidly along, helpless in the gale.

Adam himself took the rudder of the ship, but he felt that some mightier power than his own was directing the vessel. The ship gave a great lurch and the rudder was wrenched from his grasp. In a vivid flash of lightning he saw that the vessel was being driven straight against a huge rock. A terrific crash of thunder followed; it seemed to make the ship quiver from stem to stern. Some of the crew were on their knees, praying, others had been swept overboard, and Adam stood alone, with folded arms, on the deck of his vessel, trying to pierce the blackness into which he was being whirled by the gale.

"So, this it is to be free," he said.

Hardly had he spoken when there was a fearful crash, followed by screams from the crew.

The vessel had dashed against the rock. It was smashed up as if it were a mere toy struck by the club of a terrible giant. Adam was flung amid a heap of wreckage into the sea He caught hold of a fragment of wood and was carried with it against the rock. With great deftness, he clasped a projecting spur and drew himself upon it. There he sat, crouched against the rock until the storm abated. The thunder rolled away in fitful rumbling, the lightning ceased, and the wind abated as if it were tired after its frenzy. Once again the sun pierced the clouds, and Adam looked about him.

Not a sign of his ship could he see. One or two spars floated about, but the vessel with its precious cargo and every one of the crew had foundered. Dropping his head on his hands, Adam wept like a child.

"This it is to be free," he cried bitterly.

But after a while, he felt ashamed of himself.

"What would my old master say if he saw me weeping thus?" he said to himself. "This is not making the best use of my freedom."

He roused himself and looked about him. The tide was receding from the rock, and below him was a stretch of sand. He walked along the shore for some miles, but no sign of

life could he see. Not a ship was visible on the water, not even a spar of wood from his wrecked vessel now appeared.

"All, all lost," said Adam, the tears starting to his eyes afresh. "But I am a man. I must not despair."

He left the shore, scaled some low rocks and struck inland. The land was like a vast desert, and he did not know where to go. He wandered aimlessly about for a while, until at last he saw what appeared to be trees in the distance. Weary as he was with suffering and with hunger, he hastened forward and soon came in sight of a beautiful city. As he approached, he saw people coming towards him.

"I must needs ask them to befriend me," he said sadly. "Perchance I shall have to become a slave again. That would be worse than the shipwreck."

He could not quite understand why he should now love his freedom, although it had only brought him misfortune and sorrow.

As the people drew near, he saw that they were well dressed and that they had a beautiful carriage, drawn by gaily caparisoned horses.

"Long live the King," they shouted.

Adam, however, could not see the King. There were numerous attendants in rich attire

about the carriage, but it was empty. He stood still in surprise.

"I must wait until His Majesty passes," he said.

To his great astonishment, however, the richly attired attendants came and bowed before him, and all the people cried, "Welcome, welcome! Long live the King!"

The chief attendant, an old man, with a flowing white beard, and priestly raiment, bore a crown of gold on a crimson cushion. He approached Adam, bowing low.

"May it please Your Majesty," he said, "here is your royal crown," and all the people cried "Hurrah! Long live the King!"

"I—I do not understand," said Adam. "I think, good people, you have made a mistake. I am but a poor shipwrecked merchant who was but a few days ago a slave. My kind master freed me and gave me wealth, but I have been wrecked on your shore and am a beggar."

"Long live the King!" cried the people again.

"Welcome, Your Majesty," said the priest. "Will it please Your Majesty to enter your royal carriage?"

Like one dazed, Adam entered the carriage,

"'May it please Your Majesty,' he said, 'here is your royal crown.'"

the crown was placed upon his head, and, accompanied by a cheering crowd, he was conducted into the city. All the streets were gaily decorated, and the populace cheered and cheered again. Across a beautiful square the carriage was led to the gates of a magnificent marble palace. When Adam alighted, a flag was unfurled on the highest tower of the palace, gaily dressed trumpeters with golden trumpets blew a triumphant blast, and the cheering of the people grew to a roar that made Adam think of the thunder in the storm. He was conducted to a chamber where many servants gathered about him and dressed him in royal garments.

"What is Your Majesty's pleasure?" asked the aged priest, conducting Adam to a spacious chamber at the end of which was the Throne.

"I am faint with hunger," he replied. "I would have food."

Immediately he was conducted into another magnificent apartment where a banquet was prepared. Adam quickly appeased his hunger, and then looked about him.

"Surely this is a dream," he said.

It was real enough, however. Attendants stood beside him to obey his slightest command, the sound of beautiful music, from an adjoining

chamber, came to his ears, and through the windows of the palace he could see the beautiful city. The sun was setting, and everywhere hundreds of coloured lights appeared. They were the illuminations in honour of the coming of the King.

" Truly am I a fortunate slave," said Adam to himself.

He stood up, and immediately silence fell upon the throng of courtiers and attendants in the banqueting chamber.

" Gentlemen," said Adam. " Whatever this is, a reality or a dream, I know not. I fain would know. But first, ere either the dream or the reality ceases, I would thank you for your great kindness. And now, I pray you, tell me the meaning of this, for truly my head is in a whirl, and I understand it not."

" Long live the King ! " shouted the courtiers and attendants, and the crowds outside took it up, and away rolled the cry from street to street until it died into an indistinct murmur in the distance.

The priest rose at the other end of the table.

" Your Majesty," he said, " the time has come when you should know what it is that has befallen thee."

"Proceed," said Adam, re-seating himself. "I am eager to hear."

"Know then," said the priest, "that this land is an island, peopled not by mortals, but by spirits and fairies. Long years ago we prayed to God to send us a mortal to reign over us, and our prayers were answered."

"Am I that fortunate mortal?" asked Adam eagerly.

"Listen, Your Majesty, I beseech you," said the priest gravely. "Your Majesty is not the first king of this spirit island. Our kings reign but one year."

"I understand not," said Adam, looking around in great fear.

"Your Majesty need have no fear," said the priest, noticing this. "You shall be treated as our King—and we know our duty, and how to love and honour our King—for one whole year."

"And what will happen then?" asked Adam.

"One year from to-day," answered the priest, "Your Majesty's royal vestments will be removed. The crown will be taken from you, and you will be placed on board a ship and taken away to a vast desert island, and a new king will be sent us to reign in your stead."

"This is very strange," said Adam. "For one whole year I shall be the happiest mortal

in the whole world, and then, perchance, the most miserable for the rest of my life."

"That, Your Majesty," said the priest solemnly, "rests with you alone."

"How so?" asked the King.

"All the kings who have reigned over us before thee, gracious sire," returned the priest, "have been careless, thriftless, thoughtless and pleasure-loving. They have thought only of their year of regal power and have made no preparation for the desert island that is to follow. And when the day of their dethronement has come, they have been taken by surprise for the length of our years vary, and we know not to-day what will be the length of this new year. That is for the astronomers to decide by the stars."

The King sat thoughtful for a while. He recalled his former master's words and determined to use well his judgment.

"I thank thee, noble priest," he said at last. "I will ponder well thy words and seek thy advice. But tell me now the name of my island kingdom."

"That, Your Majesty," was the answer, "may you not know until the day of your departure."

Adam found that he had many duties to

perform as King, but he did everything wisely and acted always in the best interests of his people, so that they quickly grew to love him. The old priest was ever at his side to advise, and one day he told him how to prepare for the dread day of his dethronement.

"Thou art King and thy commands must be obeyed," he said. "Send, therefore, to the desert island men who will till the ground, plant corn and fruits and build houses, so that the land may be made habitable and beautiful. Establish there a new kingdom where thou wilt be received as here."

"It is, indeed, excellent advice," replied the King. "And to make sure of the work being successful, I will myself journey thither and superintend all the work."

"That may not be," hastily replied the priest. "Our King may not leave our island. His duty is with us, and he must stay here. But Your Majesty has only to remember that you are King. Your commands must be obeyed, and you can choose the best work-people to carry them out."

"Truly, it is so," said the King.

At once he sent to the island the very best workmen he could obtain, and he knew that they carried out his commands faithfully.

Before the year was ended, he knew that the island was no longer barren, and that he would be welcomed to a fruitful and flourishing land which had ceased to be a desert. So, while he lived in happiness among his spirit subjects, he looked forward with joy to the day when he should leave them and enter into his own kingdom.

The day came at last. The crown was taken from him, the royal robes were removed and Adam was clad in the rags in which he had made his entry into the island. The streets of the city were draped in black, the people were all in tears, and a band, playing doleful music, marched at the head of the procession to the desolate sea-shore where Adam had been saved from the wreck. Adam was in tears. He was loth to leave this beautiful island where for a year, among his faithful spirit subjects, he had been a King and happy, but as he thought of the new land to which he was going, his heart beat with joy and he smiled through his tears.

"Weep not, my good people" he said to the crowd that gathered about his carriage, which was draped in black; "you will have another ruler. Be faithful to him, and he will be truly a King to you. Forget not me, if you

think I have deserved to live in your memory, and weep not for me. My future happiness is assured. I go to a new island, there to reign as long as I live."

As he stepped on board the vessel which was to bear him away, he said to the aged priest—

"Tell me now, I pray you, the name of the kingdom over which I have ruled for the length of a spirit year."

"Its name," replied the priest, "is Nefesh—it is the Island of Life."

"And the name of the land to which I go?"

"That, sire, depends on thee—on what have been thy commands as to its cultivation. If the land has been well prepared, as I believe, under thy instruction, it has, then its name shall be Olom—it will be the Island of Eternity."

"Fare ye well," cried Adam, waving his hand as the vessel moved off, "I go to happiness and peace in my kingdom of Olom."

HOW REYNARD FOOLED BRUIN

How Reynard Fooled Bruin

ONE day a hungry fox met a hungry bear. They were not friends, and the fox tried to slink away. But the bear stopped him.

"Don't run from me, my good friend," he said. "I see that you are looking for your dinner. So am I. Let us search together."

The fox did not like this proposal at all, for when they hunted together before, Bruin had taken more than his share. But Reynard was too cunning to say "No" and incur the bear's anger, so he pretended to agree. His quick brain, however, was making up a plan to outwit Bruin.

"Certainly let us go together," said sly fox.

"I was just thinking of telling you that I know where there is an excellent big pudding. It is in a Jew's house. To-day is Friday, and the Jews always make a fine tasty pudding for the Sabbath."

"Splendid," said the bear, smacking his lips. "I have heard that the Jews make delicious Sabbath puddings, and I have never tasted one."

Arm in arm they set off and soon reached a large house where a Jew dwelt.

"We must be cautious," said the fox. "Follow me quietly round to the back. The pudding is in the kitchen. We can enter and enjoy ourselves."

Reynard found the kitchen door slightly ajar, and he quickly slipped in and rattled a plate on the floor.

"Wait for me," cried Bruin, hearing the noise. "Don't eat it all."

In his haste he did not notice that the kitchen door was narrow, and he got stuck in it.

"Oh," he cried in pain, and Reynard quickly jumped out through the open window, purposely upsetting a lot of plates to make a loud noise. The people of the house heard this, and they rushed into the kitchen. Bruin was still fast in the doorway, so they took sticks and gave him a good beating before he could extricate himself

and shamble off as fast as his bruises, which pained him badly, would allow him.

Next day the fox and the bear met again, and the latter said—

"You served me a shabby trick yesterday. You had the Sabbath pudding all to yourself, while I got a good beating. I shall tear you to pieces."

For a few minutes the fox was greatly frightened, but a plan quickly formed in his mind to get the better of Bruin again.

"We have always been friends," he said, "so why should you kill me now? Have I not often found you food? I had no Sabbath pudding yesterday. I fell over some plates which made a noise and brought the people. I had no time to get anything. True, I was not beaten, but I might have been caught, and I was left as hungry as yourself."

"I am still hungry," answered Bruin. "I will spare your life on one condition. Find me a good dinner. I have a liking for cheese. If you provide me with a good dinner of cheese, I will not kill you."

"Agreed," cried the fox, "but we must wait until it is dark. We cannot take any further risks in the daytime."

Bruin demurred at first, but he saw that

Reynard's proposal was only reasonable, so he watched over the fox to see that he should not slip away before night came. As soon as it was dark and the moon shone brightly in the sky, Reynard led the way to a well.

"See," he said, pointing to the reflection of the moon in the water, "is not that a fine cheese?"

"It is," replied Bruin, looking at it with hungry eyes, "but how am I to get down to it?"

"Here are two buckets fastened by a rope like a balance over the top," said the fox; "get into one and I will lower you down."

"No, thank you, my fine friend," said Bruin, shaking his head. "I am not going to let you fool me again. You must go down first."

"I have no objection to that at all," returned Reynard; then he added slily: "But I may eat all the cheese."

"That would not do," said the bear, beginning to get angry; "we must go down both together. Then I can take care that you play me no tricks. If I go down alone, I might not be able to get back."

"Very well," said the fox, "I am anxious to prove to you that I am your friend, so I agree that we should go down together. These

buckets work like a balance, and as I am not as heavy as you, I must take a big stone."

They found a big stone and put it into one of the buckets, while Bruin held the other to prevent it from going down. Then the fox got into the bucket with the stone and the bear into the other.

"We are just evenly balanced," said the fox, laughing. "Just fancy I am as heavy as you, and we can both go down for the cheese together. What fools men are. They thought that by hiding the cheese down there, I should not know how to get it. Ha, ha!"

"Oh, do hurry up," said the bear, "I'm getting hungrier every minute."

"Hurry down, you mean," said the fox, laughing still more loudly.

As he spoke, he dropped the stone from his bucket into the well. That made his bucket lighter, and Bruin being heavier went down into the well while the bucket with the fox went up.

"I hope you have got the cheese," cried the fox down the well.

"Help, help, or I shall drown," shouted Bruin. "There is no cheese here. It's water."

"Well, drink it up so that it should not

drown you," the fox called back. "Night-night. I really can't stay. I must go and find some supper."

So Bruin was not only fooled but drowned.

THE RAGGED PEDLAR

The Ragged Pedlar

AT the foot of a big, bleak mountain stood a small town in which all the people were grumblers. They were never satisfied with anything, and they were always unhappy.

"Ours is only a very small town," said the tradesmen. "Visitors never come to us, merchants never tarry with their caravans."

"We have no beautiful buildings, no fine squares and streets," said others, "and the mountain which frowns on us is bare of vegetation and always looks gloomy and even threatening."

"We have no rich inhabitants," said those who were lazy. "We have all to work, work, work continually for a bare subsistence."

Even the children were discontented, and lay idly on the ground at the street corners when the day was hot. Nobody seemed to notice that the fields at the foot of the mountain were bright and fresh and beautifully green for several months in the year, and that when the snow covered the mountain it glistened and shone dazzlingly white in the sunshine and glowed rosy pink in the sunset.

It was true that nothing seemed to happen in the town, but if there were no wealthy dwellers, there were also very few poor people. Nobody had much to give away, and so everybody was compelled to work to earn their living. But people who grumble do not notice these things.

One day when the weather had been very hot and the people lazier than ever, a strange visitor came into the town just before the sun began to set. The heat was passing, a little breeze was beginning to spring up, and even the barren mountain began to look a little beautiful under the rosy glow of the sky. Some of the huge frowning boulders and great stones began to reflect the setting sun until they shone like gold.

Perhaps the strange visitor noticed this, if the inhabitants did not, and he called out, in a loud, musical voice—

"Come hither, ye dwellers of this beautiful city of the setting sun. Yon mountain shines like burnished gold, your hundreds of roofs and minarets and domes and spires reflect the rosy hue of the sky. Yet ye are not happy. Come to me and I will sell you happiness."

The people all laughed loudly.

"What manner of fool are you?" they said to the visitor, "and where did you get those strange clothes?"

"Yes, and what did you pay for them?" asked the children.

"I paid naught for this magnificent travelling outfit," replied the stranger.

Everybody roared with laughter when he said this, because the man was dressed in rags! Except for a huge basket slung from his shoulders and a long rope wound round his body, he wore almost nothing. The rest was made up of a few patches of different colours. In his quaint cap were many holes through which his unkempt hair wound itself in fantastic fashion.

"It must take you an hour to remove your hat," said one.

"Oh, no," answered the pedlar, and he took it off with a graceful flourish and put it back again, and every hair found its way through its old hole as if by magic!

"Thou art no ordinary pedlar, sir stranger," said Ahmed, the fishmonger, to him.

"Have I not said so?" replied the pedlar. "I sell happiness."

"If thou but sellest cheaply," returned Ahmed, "thou shouldst do well here. Set down thy basket."

The big basket jumped from the man's shoulders by itself and stood itself upside down in the midst of the crowd that had gathered. The people stared in great wonderment.

"There can be nothing in it," they said.

Immediately the basket of its own accord turned a somersault and stood the other way up. It was empty.

"The man must be mad," cried Ahmed.

"And the basket bewitched," added Mustapha Ben, the tailor.

The pedlar said nothing, but handed the end of the rope which was round his waist to one of the children. The child took it and began to pull. The pedlar spun round and round like a top until the people could hardly see him, and the rope that unwound itself seemed endless. It lay coil upon coil upon the ground until it made a pile as high as the basket. Then the man stopped spinning. He took one end of the rope and threw it up in the air. Away it

spun, uncoiling itself right to the other end of the street where it caught itself neatly on a post. There was a post a few yards away from where the pedlar was standing, and he threw the loose end of the rope towards that. Again it caught, and the people then noticed that the rope was just the length of the distance between the two posts.

"A funny performance," they all said. "What does it mean, sir pedlar?"

"My store is open; I am ready to begin business," he replied.

"But where are your wares?"

"You will supply those," was the answer, as the man took up his basket.

"Now then," he cried, "all you who are unhappy bring here your miseries, your discontentments. I will exchange them for happiness."

Everybody found that they could each bring their unhappiness and they rushed forward eagerly to put it into the basket. Soon it seemed quite full, but there was always room for one thing more. There was not a man or woman in the town that did not bring something. Even many of the children had something to put into the basket.

"Observe now," said the pedlar, and he took

the basket and lifted it on to the rope. It stood there, balancing itself like a tight-rope walker.

"Do your duty," commanded the pedlar, and the basket began to roll over and over along the rope. All along it tumbled merrily, dropping the troubles as it went until every one of them hung nicely across the rope. There was Ahmed's rheumatic leg, Mustapha Ben's red hair, an old woman's aching tooth, Granny Yochki's crutch, Suliman's empty pockets, and lots of other queer things. Every cause of unhappiness and discontent in the town was hung upon the line.

"Harken now unto me, ye good people of the city of the setting sun," cried the pedlar, in his loud musical voice. "The day is waning fast, and I cannot stay with you. I promised to barter all your miseries for happiness. It is a simple task. Take each of you from the line the smallest trouble that you can see."

At once there was a big rush forward and a general scramble to snatch the smallest thing from the line. Everybody, to their surprise, found that their own trouble was the smallest, and that the troubles of other people were bigger. In a few seconds the line was quite empty.

"The basket began to roll over and over along the rope."

"Have each of you taken the smallest trouble?" asked the pedlar.

"Yes," answered Mustapha Ben, fixing on his red hair again and feeling more comfortable than without it.

"Yes," cried the others in chorus.

"Then rest ye content, good people of the city of the setting sun," answered the pedlar, in his strong musical voice. "come, my faithful basket and rope," and the basket jumped on to his shoulder and the rope wound itself rapidly round his body.

"Farewell, be contented," he sang out in a cheerful voice, and the people saw him ascend the barren mountain still glowing like gold in the setting sun. When he got to the top, he waved his hand and disappeared.

And ever after the people were happy.

THE ENCHANTED DONKEY

The Enchanted Donkey

PINKUS was a Jewish servant, and his master always called him a fool. Other people called him donkey, ass, mule, and various uncomplimentary names. Pinkus was always frightened to go out in the dark.

"Witches and magicians are about at night," he said, "and they will do something to me."

"Perhaps they will give you brains," said his master sarcastically to him once.

"No, no," replied Pinkus; "I would rather stay indoors at night and remain a fool."

One day, however, his master told him that he would have to go out that night.

"A special service is to be held in the synagogue between midnight and dawn," he explained, "and I want you to go and waken the people to attend. The beadle is a very old man, and he is ill. So you must do it."

Pinkus was very frightened, and he began to cry.

"I—I can't go out in the middle of the night when the sun is in bed fast asleep," he whimpered. "The witches will catch me; they will beat me with their brooms, or perhaps they will kill me and eat me, or change me into an animal."

"Do try and not be a fool for once," said his master. "You must do as I tell you. The witches cannot change you into a donkey at least. Have I not told you that you are that already?"

Poor Pinkus did not laugh. He felt very miserable for the rest of the day, and when night came he did not go to bed at all for a few hours' sleep. When it was midnight he opened the door of the house cautiously and peeped out into the street. Not a sound could he hear, not a soul could he see. He stood trembling for awhile at the door, then he stepped out.

The street was quite deserted, and it was not dark at all. A beautiful full moon shone in the sky, and the air was deliciously cool.

"The town looks very strange," said Pinkus, "without the crowds and the dust. It is nicer now than when the hot sun shines."

He walked with great caution at first, keeping close to the houses like a cat does. Then he began to laugh at his own fears.

"Perhaps it is all nonsense about witches and magicians and demons being out at night," he said to himself, speaking aloud.

"Take care," said a voice behind him.

Pinkus turned round with a jump, feeling very frightened. He could see nobody. The street was still quite deserted.

"What—who are you, or is it anybody at all?" he whispered, trembling all over.

There was no answer, and when his knees had stopped knocking together and his teeth gave over chattering, Pinkus said: "It was only my fancy, I suppose."

"No, it was not," said the mysterious voice again.

Pinkus screamed with fear this time, then gave a big jump in the air. But whichever way he looked he could see nothing.

"A witch, a tribe of demons, a congregation

of magicians, I am sure of it," he said. "I must be bewitched already. Oh, let me look at myself to see if I am Pinkus, a man, or a monkey, or a fish, or a mule."

In his terror, he turned back to run home. He had only taken a few strides, however, when he stumbled across something that lay in the street. Before he could scramble to his feet, the thing rose with him. It was a donkey, and Pinkus found himself clinging to its back.

"Stop pulling my hair," cried the donkey, shooting out its hind legs and making Pinkus feel very uncomfortable.

He was too frightened to speak for a few minutes. Then he said—

"Oh, kind donkey, gracious Mr. Mule, please tell me what has happened. I think it was your voice that I heard. Are you a magician, and am I bewitched? Who are you, am I you, or are you me, are we one another, or what is it?"

"It's a fool on my back," replied the donkey. "I'm not here to answer silly riddles. I know I am a donkey, but I did not think you were one also."

"A donkey," screamed poor Pinkus. "I'm an ass! A four-legged unclean beast. I know

it. I knew I should be changed into something. Oh, what shall I do? I cannot go back to my master. He will put me into a stable and make me eat thistles."

"If you are a donkey, it's your own fault," said the ass, prancing about and making Pinkus cling all the closer. "You are a man right enough, even if you are a fool, and ought really to have four legs and long ears like me. How many feet and hands have you got?"

"Two of each kind," answered Pinkus tearfully, after examining them several times.

"Then you ought to be thankful," said the donkey. "And listen to me—if you want to behave like a gentleman and keep yourself out of trouble, you won't call me an unclean beast again. I don't like it, and I won't have it."

"I shall be very good, O most learned and gracious Mr. Donkey," returned Pinkus. "Please let me get off your back and go home."

"No," said the animal, beginning to kick again, "I shan't let you get off my back. I won't let you go home. You are a lazy good-for-nothing. Have you forgotten what you have to do? I have not, and I am here to help you. Sit up straight and don't pinch. It annoys me. I will take you all round the town,

so that you can waken the Jews and call them to the synagogue. But you must not talk, or ask questions. If you do, something serious might happen to you."

"Oh, woe unto me," Pinkus began to cry.

"Do stop that ridiculous noise," said the ass, beginning to dance again. "It annoys me. My ears are not used to such awful sounds. My throat hurts me already from talking to you, and I must be careful with it. I have to sing a sentimental song at a fairies' concert to-morrow night."

"Fairies, demons, witches! Oh, woe unto me," cried Pinkus again.

"Stop!" cried the donkey in a rage. "If you go on like that, you will make me ill, and I don't know where to find a doctor at this hour of the night. Don't forget my warning. You must not say another word, or something serious may happen to both of us. Hold tight."

Pinkus shut his mouth, pressed his knees close to the donkey's side, and the animal started off. It went gently and slowly, and Pinkus began to feel comfortable. It was a long time since he had a nice ride like this. He stroked the ass to show that he was pleased. But Pinkus was a fool, and in two minutes he

had quite forgotten the donkey's warning about keeping his mouth closed.

"Please tell me, kind and learned and gracious Mr. Donkey," he said, "do you do this every night?"

The next moment he was nearly shot over the donkey's head: the animal had stopped with a sudden jerk.

"Now you have got yourself into trouble," said the ass. "You forgot my warning, so it is your own fault. I told you not to say another word. Don't blame me."

"Oh, woe unto me," cried Pinkus. "What is going to happen now? Is the ass going to change places with me, or to turn me into a pig, or an elephant, or a bee?"

He looked at his hands and feet. He still had two of each, and they showed no signs of change. Then he looked round. The houses seemed to be different. They seemed smaller or rather, the housetops seemed nearer. They were coming nearer still. Then he looked down at the ground. He could hardly see it at all. It was far away. What was the matter? He looked at the donkey, and gave a great cry of fear.

The ass was growing. Its ears were as big as Pinkus himself, its body as large as an elephant.

With every step it took, it continued to grow until Pinkus could see right over the house tops.

"Woe unto me," cried the poor man. "I will fall off and kill myself. Then the elephant-donkey will eat me. What shall I say to my master then? He is sure to beat me."

The ass took no notice, but went on growing. Pinkus had never seen so big an animal. It left the town and moved towards a tall tower. When it got there, Pinkus was just level with the top. The donkey stopped.

"Take care of yourself, dear, kind, gracious Mr. Fool," it cried in a voice of thunder. It kicked up its hind legs, and Pinkus felt himself thrown from its back on to the top of the tower.

"By-by, Mr. Foolman," said the donkey, waving its long tail and long ears. "When next you are told to hold your tongue, do so."

Then it moved off, growing smaller with every step until it vanished. Pinkus cried, "Help, save me, I am drowning," and all sorts of things, but nobody could hear him.

Everybody was late for the synagogue, and many hours passed before the cries of poor Pinkus were heard. All the town came to see

"Pinkus was thrown from the donkey's back on to the top of the tower."

what was the matter. It took a long time before they could fix up ladders to bring Pinkus down. He was tired and hungry, and everybody laughed at him and called him fool when he told his story.

"You should not talk so much, you donkey," they said.

THE GREEDY FOX

The Greedy Fox

FOX one day passed by a beautiful vineyard. The grapes were just ripe, and they looked very tempting.

"Ah, I shall know where to find my supper to-night," said the fox. "I shall come back when everybody is asleep."

So he came back at night, but, to his disappointment, he found that he could not get into the vineyard. All around were railings placed so close together that he could not possibly creep between them. He tried very hard to squeeze himself through, and once he nearly got stuck. At last he had to give up the attempt.

"I shall have to look elsewhere for my supper," said Reynard to himself. "But I did so want some grapes, and I am tired."

He laid down to sleep, and when he woke in the morning, the grapes looked more tempting than ever.

"Well, this is exasperating," said sly fox. "I must and shall have some grapes. I shall sit here and starve myself until I am thin enough to creep through the railings."

For three days Reynard suffered the pangs of hunger, and then he was thin enough to crawl between the railings into the vineyard. He ate his fill, enjoying himself hugely.

"This is jolly," he said, rolling on the ground. "It was worth starving myself three days to enjoy such a feast."

But when he tried to leave the vineyard, he found that he had grown fat again from so much feeding.

"It seems to me I have been silly after all," he said ruefully. "Now I shall have to starve myself again for three days, with all these beautiful grapes around me, to make myself thin enough to creep out."

It was very hard on the poor fox, but he admitted to himself he had been greedy.

"It serves me right," he said, as he crept out, feeling very weak. "Now I am worse off than before, for I have little strength, and yet I must go and look for food."

THE MAN WHO WAS A HUNDRED YEARS YOUNG

The Man who was a Hundred Years Young

PASSING through the city of Tiberias, King Hadrian was surprised to see a very old man, with a long, white beard, planting a fig-tree. He told his attendants to bring the man before him.

"How old are you?" the King asked the man.

"Your Majesty," he replied proudly, "to-day is my birthday. I am just one hundred years old."

"Why do you plant that tree?" asked the King. "Had you laboured when you were younger, you would have stored up something for your old age."

"I was not idle in my youth," replied the

old man, "and I hope to eat of the fruit of this tree."

The King was amazed.

"Surely," he said, "it will take years before that sapling that you have just planted will grow into a tree and bear fruit. Do you hope to live so many years?"

"Why not?" returned the man. "If it be God's pleasure to let me live even another hundred years, He can so ordain it. If not, well then, your Majesty, the fruit of this tree shall be for my son. My father left the fruit of his labour for me."

"You are old only in years, but not in spirit," said the King. "You are one hundred years young. I shall not forget you, and if you live to eat of the figs of this tree, bring some to me at the Palace."

The years rolled on, and one day a very aged man stood before the Palace gates with a basket of ripe figs in his hand.

"I wish to see the King," he said to the guards. "Years ago, on my one hundredth birthday, I planted a fig-tree, and the King bade me bring the first fruit of it to the Palace."

The guards laughed at this story at first, but at last they informed the King, who at once ordered the man to be brought before him.

"What is your wish with me?" he asked.

"Sire," replied the old man, "I am the man, old in years but young in spirit, whom thou didst see on my hundredth birthday plant the fig-tree of which these are the first fruits. It was thy wish that if I lived, I should bring them to thee."

The King remembered, and he was so delighted that he took the figs and ordered his soldiers to fill the old man's basket with gold pieces. When the old man had left, the Vizier said to His Majesty—

"This man is a Jew. Why didst thou honour him so for a few figs?"

"Silence," commanded the King. "Why should I not honour a man whom God has so honoured?"

When the old man returned to his home, his neighbour's wife saw his basket of gold.

"Where did you get so much wealth?" she asked in astonishment.

"At the Palace," he replied, "in exchange for a basket of figs."

The woman at once ran indoors to her husband.

"Husband mine," she cried, in great excitement. "We shall be very rich, wealthy enough to buy a great palace, if you will but

do as I bid you. Take the biggest basket you can find and fill it with ripe figs. Then carry it to the Palace. The Emperor loves figs, and he will fill the basket with gold for you."

The husband would not believe this until he heard of his neighbour's luck. Then he got a huge basket of figs, so big and so heavy that he could hardly carry it, and staggered off under its burden to the Palace.

"Let me in to the King," he said to the guards.

"What would you with His Majesty?" they asked in surprise.

"I wish to give him this basket of figs for gold pieces in exchange."

The guards laughed loudly and sent word to the King that a lunatic with a basket of figs was at the gates.

"Let me see him," said King Hadrian, much amused.

The man was brought before the King, still with his big basket on his shoulder.

"I pray your gracious Majesty," he said, "to take these figs and fill my basket with gold pieces, even as thou didst to my neighbour, the aged Jew."

"In what way has God honoured you?" asked the King. "It seems to me that He has

dishonoured you by making you a fool. You shall have the reward which a fool deserves. Take your stand in the courtyard with your figs."

The man did so, thinking that he would get a basket of gold, but instead, the guards, at the instruction of the King, began to pelt him with his own figs.

Feeling very sore, the poor man hurried home and told his wife.

"It is all your fault," he whined.

"You have much to be thankful for," she replied, to his great surprise.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"You can be thankful," she answered, "that the Jew planted a fig-tree and not a cocoanut tree. How would you have liked to have been pelted with cocoanuts?"

THE KING, THE QUEEN, AND THE BEE

The King, the Queen, and the Bee

ON a bright summer's day, when the sun beat down fiercely upon the heads of the people, King Solomon sought the shade of one of his favourite gardens. But even where the foliage on the trees was so thick that it seemed the sun's rays could not penetrate, it was also hot. Not a breath of air was there to fan the monarch's cheek, and he lay down on the thick grass and gazed through the branches of the trees at the blue sky.

"This great heat makes me weary," said the King, and in a few minutes he had quietly fallen into a deep sleep.

All was still in the beautiful garden, except for the sound of a few humming birds, the twittering of the moths whose many-coloured wings looked more beautiful than ever in the bright sunshine, and the buzzing of the bees. But even these sounds grew still as the fierce rays from the sky grew hotter until all nature seemed hushed to rest. Only one tiny bee was left moving in the garden. It flew steadily from flower to flower, sipping the honey, until at length it began to feel overcome by the heat.

"Oh, dear! I wonder what is the matter with me," buzzed the little bee. "This is the first time I have come out of the hive, and I do feel queer. I hope I am not going to faint."

The little bee felt giddy, and after flying round and round dizzily for a few minutes it fell and dropped right on to King Solomon's nose. Immediately the King awoke with such a start that the little bee was frightened almost out of its wits and flew straight back to the hive.

King Solomon sat up and looked round to see what it was that had awakened him so rudely. He felt a strange pain at the tip of his nose. He rubbed it with his royal fore-finger, but the pain increased.

Attendants came rushing towards him and asked him what was the matter.

"I must have been stung on the nose by a bee," said the King angrily. "Send for the Lord High Physician and the Keeper of the Court Plaister immediately. I cannot have a blister on the tip of my nose. To-morrow I am to be visited by the Queen of Sheba, and it will not do to have a swollen nose tied up in a sling."

The Lord High Physician came with his many assistants, each carrying a box of ointment, or lint, or some other preparation which might be required. King Solomon's nose, and especially the tip of it, was examined most carefully through a microscope.

"It is almost nothing," said the Lord High Physician reassuringly. "It is just a tiny sting from a very little bee which did not leave its sting in the wound. It will be healed in an hour or two and the Queen of Sheba will not be able to notice that anything at all is the matter to-morrow."

"But meanwhile it smarts," said King Solomon. "I am seriously annoyed with the little bee. How dared it sting me, King Solomon, monarch of all living things on earth, in the air and in the waters. Knows it not that I am

its Royal Master to whom all homage and respect is due ? "

The pain soon ceased, but His Majesty did not like the smell of the greasy ointment which was put on his nose, and he determined that the bee should be brought before him for trial.

" Place the impudent little bee under arrest at once," he commanded, " and bring it before me so that I may hear what it has to say."

" But I know it not," returned the Lord High Chamberlain, to whom the command was given.

" Then summon the Queen bee before me in an hour and bid her bring the culprit," answered the monarch. " Tell her that I shall hold all the bees guilty until the saucy little offender is produced before me."

The order was carried to the hive by one of the butterflies in attendance on the King and spread consternation among the bees. Such a buzzing there was that the butterfly said—

" Stop making that noise. If the King hears you, it will only make matters worse."

The Queen bee promised to obey King Solomon's command, and in an hour she made her appearance in state before the great throne. Slowly and with much pomp, the Queen bee made her way to King Solomon. She was the

largest of the bees and was escorted by a body-guard of twelve female bees who cleared the way before her, walking backwards and bowing constantly with their faces to her.

King Solomon was surrounded by all his Court which included living beings, fairies, demons, spirits, goblins, animals, birds and insects. All raised their voices in a loud hurrah when His Majesty took his seat on the Throne, and a very strange noise the Court made. The lions roared, the serpents hissed, the birds chirped, the fairies sang and the demons howled. The goblins that had no voices could only grin.

"Silence!" cried a herald. "The Queen bee is requested to stand forth."

Still attended by her twelve guards, the Queen bee approached the foot of the Throne and made obeisance to King Solomon.

"I, thy slave, the Queen bee," she buzzed, "am here at thy bidding, mighty ruler, great and wise. Command and thou shalt be obeyed."

"It is well," replied Solomon. "Hast thou brought with thee the culprit, the bee that did dare to attack my nose with its sting?"

"I have, your Majesty," answered the Queen bee. "It is a young bee that this day did

leave the hive for the first time. It has confessed to me. It did not attack your Majesty wilfully, but by accident, owing to giddiness caused by the heat, and it could not have injured your Majesty seriously, because it left not its sting in the wound. Be merciful, gracious King."

"Fear not my judgment," said the King. "Bid the bee stand forth."

Tremblingly, the little bee stood at the foot of the Throne and bowed three times to King Solomon.

"Knowest thou not," said the King, "that I am thy royal master whose person must be held sacred by all living things?"

"Yes, gracious Majesty," buzzed the bee. "Thy slave is aware of this. It was but an accident, and it is the nature of thy slave, the bee, who is in duty bound to obey thy laws, to thrust forth its sting when in danger. I thought I was in danger when I fell."

"So was I, for I was beneath you," returned King Solomon.

"Punish me not," pleaded the bee. "I am but one of your Majesty's smallest and humblest slaves, but even I may be of service to your Majesty some day."

These words from the little bee made the

whole Court laugh. Even the goblins which could not speak grinned from ear to ear and rolled their big eyes.

"Silence!" commanded the King sternly. "There is naught to laugh at in the bee's answer. It pleases me well. Go, thou art free. Some day I may need thee."

The little bee bowed its head three times before the King and flew away, buzzing happily.

Next day it kept quite close to the Palace.

"I want to see the procession when the Queen of Sheba arrives," it said, "and I also must be near the King in case His Majesty may want me."

In great state, the beautiful Queen of Sheba, followed by hundreds of handsomely robed attendants, approached King Solomon who was seated on his Throne, surrounded by all his Court.

"Great and mighty King of Israel," she said, curtseying low, "I have heard of thy great wisdom and would fain put it to the test. Hitherto all questions put to thee hast thou answered without difficulty. But I have sworn to puzzle thy wondrous wisdom with my woman's wit. Be heedful."

"Beauteous Queen of Sheba," returned King Solomon, rising and bowing in return to her curtsey, "thou art as witty as thou art fair,

and if thou art successful in puzzling me, thy triumph shall be duly rewarded. I will load thee with rich presents and proclaim thy wit and wisdom to the whole world."

"I accept thy challenge," replied the Queen, "and at once."

Behind Her Majesty stood two beautiful girl attendants, each holding a bouquet of flowers. The Queen of Sheba took the flowers, and holding a bouquet in each hand, said to King Solomon—

"Tell me, thou who art the wisest man on earth, which of these bunches of flowers is real and which artificial."

"They are both beautiful and their fragrance delicious in the extreme," replied King Solomon.

"Ah," said the Queen, "but only one bunch has fragrance. Which is it?"

King Solomon looked at the flowers. Both bunches looked exactly alike. From where he sat, it was impossible to detect any difference. He did not answer at once, and he knit his brows as if perplexed. The courtiers also looked troubled. Never before had they seen the King hesitate.

"Is it impossible for your Majesty to answer the question?" the Queen asked.

Solomon shook his head and smiled.

"Never yet has a problem baffled me," he said. "Your Majesty shall be answered, and correctly."

"And at once," said the Queen of Sheba imperiously.

"So be it," answered King Solomon, gazing thoughtfully round and raising his magic sceptre.

Immediately he heard what no one else did, the faint buzzing of the tiny wings of the little bee which had settled on one of the window panes of the Palace.

"Bid that window be opened," he commanded, pointing to it with his sceptre, "and let the bee enter to obey my wish."

The window was promptly opened, and in flew the little bee. Straight towards the Queen of Sheba it flew, and now its buzzing could be heard by all the courtiers, who eagerly watched its flight through the air. Without any hesitation, it settled on the bouquet in the Queen's left hand.

"Thou hast my answer, fair Queen of Sheba," said King Solomon, rising, "given to thee by one of the tiniest of my subjects. It has settled on the flowers that are natural. The bouquet in your right hand is made by human hands."

The whole Court applauded the monarch's

wisdom in bidding the little bee help him out of his difficulty.

"Your Majesty is indeed the wisest man on earth," said the Queen.

"Thanks, my little friend," said the King to the bee, and it flew away, buzzing merrily.

HONEIM'S MAGIC SHOES

Honeim's Magic Shoes

IN a large city in the Far East, in the ancient days of romance and mystery, dwelt a queer old shoemaker, named Honeim. He was a Jew, and those who were not Jews said he was a magician. He could tell how rich, or how poor, a man was merely by looking at him, and he never would allow any one to purchase a pair of shoes from him which they really could not afford to buy.

Honeim sold all kinds of shoes, and his open shop in the principal bazaar of the city was a remarkable sight. Hundreds of shoes of all shapes, all sizes and all colours were neatly ranged on shelves, and on the floor, and were

hung from poles and from the ceiling. Honeim had no need to ask any one who came to buy shoes and sandals the measurement of their feet. By merely looking at his customer, he could tell the best shape and size and colour that was wanted, and as a rule the very first pair of shoes which he offered were the most satisfactory.

If a customer was not satisfied after seeing three pairs, Honeim would say—

"I have not the pair of shoes which you require. You must go elsewhere."

Then he would take up a book and answer no more questions. If the customer was anxious to buy a pair of shoes which Honeim knew he could not afford, the queer shoemaker would say—

"It is my business only to satisfy my patrons. I cannot sell you these shoes below a certain sum of money. That sum is beyond your means. It has not been decreed that we shall do business to-day. Peace be with you."

The next minute he would be deep in the study of his book and would not say another word.

One day an Arab on a camel stopped at his shop and gazed admiringly at the hundreds of shoes exhibited. Honeim saw him, but took no

notice. Usually, when any one stopped to look at his shoes, Honeim immediately rushed forward to describe their good qualities. This time, however, he kept on studying his book. The Arab, failing to attract the shoemaker's attention, induced his camel to go down on its knees, and then he slowly descended from its back. He entered the shop, but still Honeim took no notice of him.

"Sir," said the Arab at last, "I desire to purchase a pair of shoes."

"And wherefore?" asked Honeim, without looking up from his book.

"Surely, one only purchases shoes to wear," replied the Arab.

"Thou dost not need shoes," returned Honeim, turning to look at the Arab. "Thou art a son of the desert. Thou dwellest not in a city. Thy home is on the sandy plain where shoes are useless. Thou hast but come into this city to purchase trappings for thy camel, and hast already spent freely of thy little store of money. I cannot trade with thee."

The Arab was astonished.

"How camest thou to know all this?" he asked.

"Seek not to learn how Honeim knows of the things which most men know not," replied

Honeim. "Let it suffice thee that I know. Have I not spoken truth?"

"Verily thou hast," said the Arab, wondering all the more, "but perchance thou hast been informed."

"Waste not idle words," was Honeim's answer. "Who is there in this great city who knows of thee, or who knew of thy coming to-day? None, I tell thee."

"True, true," said the Arab musingly. "Thou art a strange shoemaker. Perchance art thou a magician."

"It is not given to thee, son of the desert, to learn the secrets which I choose to keep from thee," answered Honeim. "Already hast thou tarried long in this city. Get thee to thy tribe, to thy tent again, ere evil befall thee. Thou art ignorant of the ways of a great city. Depart in peace."

The Arab grew impatient.

"Who art thou to speak thus to me?" he demanded angrily. "Thou art but a shoemaker; I am the son of a desert chief. My father possesses great store of wealth in camels."

"I see that thou art but a son of the desert and knowest not the ways of the city," replied Honeim with a smile. "Depart in peace, I

tell thee, and enjoy the wealth of thy father, the chief. Waste it not in the purchase of shoes for which thou hast no need in the desert."

The Arab squatted on the carpet in the centre of the shop.

"Here, sirrah," he exclaimed, "will I remain until I have selected a pair of shoes. There are occasions when even a son of the desert may need to encase his feet in the trappings of the city."

Honeim looked at him very keenly for a few moments and then smiled.

"She on whom thou hast set thy heart," he said at last, "will love thee more if thou seekest not to follow the ways of the city swains. She, too, is the daughter of a chief, a child of the desert. Tell me, has she ever worn a pair of shoes?"

The Arab sprang to his feet.

"How knowest thou this?" he asked fiercely.

Honeim laughed.

"Have I not already informed thee," he said, "that it is useless to seek to learn of the sources of my information. Suffice it that I know thou art in love with a beauteous desert maid. Tell me, why dost thou not propose to purchase a pair of shoes for the maiden? As

thou seest, I have a goodly store of shoes for the dainty feet of damsels."

"She would not wear them," said the Arab dolefully, ceasing to marvel any longer at the things which Honeim said.

"Then," said the shoemaker, with a ring of triumph in his voice, "is it likely that it will please her to see thy feet encased in shoes?"

This time the Arab smiled.

"Thou art a mysterious and wonderful man, Honeim," he said, "but thou art aged and know naught, I perceive, of the ways of maidens. Should I return with my feet encased in a pair of red shoes, I will be different from the other swains of the desert and will find favour in the damsel's eyes."

Honeim sighed.

"If so thou believest," he said, "it will be difficult to make thee think otherwise. Thou art a stubborn youth and hast yet much to learn. I will show thee some shoes, but have a care. I have warned thee, and the warnings of Honeim are not to be disregarded.

"Silence! Thou art merely a shoemaker," cried the Arab. "The day is waning, and I must return ere set of sun. Show me a pair of red shoes."

Honeim put several shoes before the Arab, but he rejected them at once.

"These," he said, "are shoes for a town beggar and not for the son of a desert chief. I must have shoes of more gorgeous appearance."

"But I tell thee thou hast not the money for such shoes," said Honeim.

"I have had enough of thy impertinent nonsense," cried the Arab savagely. "Remember, I am the son of a desert chief of wealth and power, and thou, dog of a Jew, art but a miserable shoemaker."

Honeim's eyes flashed.

"He who calls me dog of a Jew will have cause to repent," he said in a quiet tone of voice.

The Arab scowled. The old man's words troubled him, but he was most anxious to have a pair of shoes, and he bit his lip in vexation and said not another word. Looking round, he saw a pair of bright red shoes with golden laces.

"Those are pleasing to my eyes," he said. "They will surely be pleasing also to the bright eyes of the maiden I adore. Permit me to see if they are of the length of my foot."

Honeim handed him the shoes without a word, and the Arab almost screamed with

delight when he saw that they fitted exactly. He got up from the carpet and strutted round, feeling very proud of himself.

"She will not dare to refuse me now," he said. "These will I take, Honeim."

"Thou hast not yet inquired the price," said the shoemaker.

The Arab took a gold piece from his wallet and offered it to Honeim.

"This will more than pay thee, I think," he said, "so give me the change and let me begone. I am eager that she who is to be my bride should see them to-day."

"Thou art in too great a hurry, son of the desert," replied Honeim. "Gold will not purchase these shoes."

"What then?" asked the Arab, greatly surprised.

"For these shoes," replied Honeim slowly, "the price is a camel—such as thine by my door."

"Pshaw!" said the Arab. "Thou knowest not what thou sayest. My camel is worth more than twenty such pairs of shoes. It is one of the noblest in my father's possession. It is a camel fit for an emperor."

"And so are these shoes," returned Honeim. "It is useless to haggle with me. Thou canst

not have the shoes and the camel at the same time."

"Those are strange words," the Arab said. "What mean they?"

"Honeim wastes not, nor repeats his words," said the shoemaker. "Scorn not my warning. I will sell thee another pair of shoes for less than thy gold piece."

"It is as I surmised," the Arab said. "Thou must be a magician, and perchance there is magic in the shoes."

"Perchance," said Honeim, shrugging his shoulders. "Remember, I have warned thee."

"A fig for thy warning," cried the Arab. "I am the son of a desert chief. Courage is not lacking in my tribe. I defy thy magic, and will have the shoes."

"Only in return for thy camel," said Honeim, quietly.

In vain the Arab haggled and pleaded. Honeim would scarce listen. He took up his book and was deaf to all entreaties. At last the Arab stormed and threatened, but all to no purpose. Honeim did not even reply. Half a dozen times the Arab commenced to mount his camel and then returned to plead again, but still Honeim said not a word and quietly went on studying his book. The Arab mounted his

camel at last, and as the animal rose from its knees, he shouted, loudly enough for everybody to hear—

"Dog of a Jew!"

Honeim slowly rose from the carpet on which he had squatted and looked after the Arab.

"He would not heed my warning," he said to himself. "He must be made to see that it was not an idle one."

Leaving his son in charge of the shop, he took the red shoes with the golden laces and made his way by a short cut to the road which he knew the Arab would have to take. He passed the city's gates before the Arab on his camel, and when he came to a lonely part of the road he dropped one of the shoes and continued his walk with quick strides for one so aged.

A little while afterwards the son of the desert chief came along the road on his camel. His brow was clouded and he seemed moody and despondent. Suddenly, however, he saw the red shoe in the road, and he sprang from the camel with a cry of surprise and delight.

"It is exactly like Honeim's magic shoes," he said, in astonishment. "I wonder how it came hither."

He could see nobody, however, nor could he see a second shoe. He threw it down in disgust.

"What is the good of one shoe to me?" he said. "I am dallying, and it is growing late."

Hastily, he remounted his camel, and made it move along at a rapid pace. It had not gone more than half a league, however, when he suddenly stopped it and sprang to the ground. He had caught sight of another red shoe!

"Why," he said, "it is the fellow of the other. The two are a pair and must have fallen from some caravan. What a fool I was not to have taken the other. I should now have had the pair and without any payment whatsoever."

He looked round. The sun was beginning to set, only a league ahead was the desert where his father was encamped, and on the lonely road he could not see anybody.

"Yes, I will," he said to himself, and tying his camel to a tree, he started to run back along the road as fast as he could. The Arab was a swift runner, the swiftest in his tribe, and in a few minutes he was back at the spot where he had found the first shoe. It was still on the ground where he had thrown it.

"I am in luck's way and can laugh at the Jew's warning," he cried with delight, picking up the shoe. "I have the pair now, for nothing."

Swift as a deer he ran back again, but stopped suddenly.

"I think I have run all the distance," he said, panting, "but where is my camel?"

There were not many trees, and he thought he could recognize the one to which he had tied his camel. Yet it was nowhere to be seen. Up and down the road he ran for some time, but no camel and no living thing of any kind could he see.

Weary and sorrowful, at last he commenced his walk home in the direction where the sun was sinking, a ball of fiery red, like the colour of the shoes which were no longer beautiful to him, but which he carried in his hand.

"What were the exact words of the Jew's warning?" he said to himself. "'Thou canst not have the shoes and the camel at the same time.' Those were his words of warning, and I disregarded them. What shall I say now to my father and to the maiden?"

It was almost dark when he arrived at the camp. His father was waiting for him, and by his side was a beautiful Arab maid, with lustrous eyes. With head bowed, he approached them.

"Hast thou returned alone and on foot?" asked his father.

"It is as thou seest," he replied sorrowfully.

" Where is thy camel ? "

" It has been stolen from me."

His father's eyes flashed, and angry words rose to his lips. But before he could speak, the maiden said, in a voice of tender sweetness—

" But surely thou hast brought something back ? "

" I have brought back Honeim's shoes," he replied, but when he looked for them in his cloak where he had put them, they were gone !

" They have disappeared," he said sadly. " I have been fooled by a magician. But it is my own fault. He warned me, and I heeded not."

The girl laughed loudly. So did his father, and all the camp came out to laugh at him.

And from that day to this, people in the Far East when they wish to say that a man has been on a fool's errand use the words—

" He has brought back naught but Honeim's shoes."

SAVED BY A ROSE

Saved by a Rose

A KING had a beautiful garden in which he spent a portion of each day. He loved to inhale the perfume of the many fragrant flowers which grew there, to walk in the shade of the noble trees, and to watch the blossoms burst open and the fruit ripen. Never was he so happy as when he was in the garden, and those who tended it for him had instructions to spare no pains to keep it always beautiful and in perfect condition. So cleverly was it laid out, and so varied were the many plants and blooms in it, that there were flowers and green leaves all the year round, even in winter.

One day the King left to take part in a war, and he walked round the garden to take farewell of his favourite flowers and trees.

"Take great care of them," he said to the head gardener. "I shall never cease to think of my beautiful and fragrant flowers."

"Your Majesty's instructions shall be obeyed," replied the man. "Flowers are like living beings. It is a pity to let them die, or cruelly kill them."

"What mean you by such extraordinary words?" asked the King.

"Nothing," returned the man, wiping a tear from his eye. "Your Majesty leaves behind these flowers and trees in my care, but you are taking away my son, my only son, in your army. He is to me what this garden is to Your Majesty."

"It is his duty to fight for his King," said His Majesty, and he strode away.

Many months passed before the war was ended, but at last the King returned at the head of his army. Many had been killed and buried on the battlefield, many others had been wounded and were coming along slowly in chariots behind those who came with the King. Among those severely wounded was the gardener's son.

The King himself told the old man so as soon as he saw him.

"Yes, yes, Your Majesty, I know," he re-

turned. "I heard the sad news weeks ago when some of the wounded came home. He will be like your garden, different, Your Majesty, different."

"What words are these?" demanded the King. "Have not you carried out my orders and kept my beloved garden in proper condition?"

"War is a terrible thing, Your Majesty," said the gardener. "It destroys life, it devastates fields, plantations and gardens."

"I understand not your mysterious words," said the King wrathfully. "Lead me to my garden."

As soon as he saw it, he uttered an exclamation of surprise and rage. The garden had been neglected. Instead of beautiful, well-kept lawns with dainty beds of flowers, were wild patches of uncut grass and weeds. Yellow leaves littered the paths that were once so trim and neat, thorns, brambles and briars grew everywhere.

"This is no longer a garden, this is a wilderness," exclaimed the King. "Cut every tree and every plant and shrub and bush down and burn them."

"Yes, Your Majesty, war is a terrible thing," said the gardener.

"You are doddering; I understand you not," said the King. "Obey my orders at once, and I shall stand by and see that you do it."

The gardener called his men, and they brought axes and sickles and scythes and commenced to cut everything down and pile the shrubs and bushes into great heaps ready for burning.

"Not a single flower left," said the King sadly, as he watched the work of destruction. But suddenly he cried "Stop!"

"I see a single rose, a briar rose in the midst of all this wilderness," he said, hastily rushing to it. He picked it carefully, and inhaled its delicious perfume.

"How beautiful, how sweet!" he exclaimed. "It seems all the more beautiful because it is the only one in this wilderness."

"My son is my only child," said the gardener sorrowfully.

The King looked at him in surprise. Then he seemed to understand, and he took the old man gently by the hand.

"Cut no more bushes down," he said. "For the sake of this one beautiful flower, the whole plantation shall live and flourish again. I did wrong to take your only child. But he shall have the best attention of the most skilful

"This is no longer a garden, this is a wilderness," exclaimed the King.

doctors and physicians. And he shall be as handsome and as perfect as I know you will make my garden again. You shall live, too, more in my esteem than ever, for in the bitterness of my heart I had determined on your death for this neglect of my garden."

The old gardener set to work with all his skill and determination. Before the summer passed, the garden was as beautiful as ever, and in its shady paths and its delightful arbours his son was nursed back to health and strength again and became the King's favourite guard.

THE FOOL OF ATHINA

The Fool of Athina

THINA was a city a few days' journey from Jerusalem. Its people were envious of the reputation of Jerusalem. They wanted to be considered as important as the people of the famous city, and they never hesitated to say nasty things about Jerusalem. Once, a merchant of Athina paid a short visit to Jerusalem, and when he returned home he told a lot of silly stories about the sacred city and its people.

"It is not a city at all," he said, laughing. "It is really a big lunatic asylum. All the people are mad, or fools. Their customs are absurd everything they do is ridiculous."

Naturally, everybody laughed heartily, and afterwards when anybody in Athina wanted to call a person a fool, they said he came from Jerusalem.

"Go to Jerusalem," meant that a person was silly and only fit to live in Jerusalem and not in Athina.

News of this reached the Holy City, and the dwellers there were most indignant. A number of the leading merchants held a meeting, and they decided that something must be done to put a stop to the foolish stories told in Athina.

"It is easy for us to decide that this should be done," said one of the merchants, a man named Hafiz Ben, "but it will be exceedingly difficult to carry out our desires. We must do something to make the man who spread the report ashamed of himself."

How this was to be done was the puzzle, and there was silence in the room while every one thought deeply.

"I have a plan," cried Hafiz Ben suddenly, and he told it to the others in a whisper. They all chuckled, and said it was an excellent idea. They agreed also that Hafiz Ben was the best possible person to carry out the plan. One day, therefore, Hafiz Ben left Jerusalem alone

for Athina. When he arrived there and said that he came from Jerusalem, a big crowd gathered round him and laughed at everything he did.

When he went into an inn for refreshment, they gathered round the door and jeered at him.

"Put his plate of food on the floor; he will lap it like a cat," shouted one to the inn-keeper.

"Is it true," asked another, making a mock bow to Hafiz Ben, "that in your great asylum city you lie on your backs at your meals and let your servants pour your food into your throats through a funnel?"

Hafiz Ben took no notice, but sat and ate his food quietly. The crowd grew bigger, but suddenly the people parted to make way for one who seemed to be a person of importance. When he got to the door of the inn, he looked closely at Hafiz Ben. Then he turned to the crowd and said—

"Of a truth, it is a Jerusalem fool. I recognize him by his long ears. All the Jerusalem asses have long ears."

The crowd laughed all the more, and the one who had spoken entered the inn.

"Pray, be seated, and peace be with you," said Hafiz Ben to him.

"Ha, ha! Did I not tell you?" cried the man of Athina to the crowd. "In Jerusalem, they always put the cart before the horse. Did you not observe that he first asked me to be seated and then gave me the salutation?"

Hafiz Ben gathered from this man's speech and manner that he must be the person who had spread all the silly stories about Jerusalem, and he became very anxious to make friends with him.

"You know Jerusalem," said Hafiz Ben.

"Of a truth," replied the man proudly. "I, Sidi Abdulla, alone have visited your asylum city. It is from me that they know of you."

Hafiz Ben called for wine for Sidi Abdulla, which greatly flattered that person. When he had drunk his fill, he proposed that they should take a walk through the city, and Hafiz Ben readily assented. His plan was beginning to work splendidly. A large crowd followed Hafiz Ben and Sidi. Suddenly Hafiz stopped and raised his hands in horror.

"Oh, I have broken my shoe string," he said, in a loud voice, so that all could hear. "Please, friend Sidi Abdulla, lead me to a shoemaker so that he may repair it for me."

Sidi Abdulla laughed heartily.

"Did I not tell you?" he said to the crowd. "The Jerusalem man says that only a shoemaker can repair the string of his shoe."

Hafiz said nothing, but walked quietly in the midst of the jeering crowd to a shoemaker's shop.

"I will leave my shoe with you, so that you can repair the string," he said. "I will call for it in an hour."

The shoemaker was too much surprised to speak for a minute. Then he was about to say that it was not necessary to leave the shoe, and that he had shoe strings of all colours to sell, but Sidi Abdulla whispered to him that the stranger was a fool from Jerusalem.

"Good sir," said the shoemaker to Hafiz, "this is indeed a most serious breakage of your shoe string. I shall put three of my best workmen to the task of repairing it, so that it may be finished within the hour."

In an hour, Hafiz Ben and Sidi Abdulla called again, and the shoemaker showed them the shoe with a new string.

"You perceive, sir stranger," he said to Hafiz, "a new lace had to be made. It was no easy task, but as you see, sir, it fits exactly."

"It is indeed excellent," replied Hafiz. "You are a wonderful shoemaker. What is the amount of my debt to you for this marvellous workmanship?"

"To you, sir, a stranger, only one ducat," replied the shoemaker, winking at the crowd.

They all laughed merrily, because that was the price of a new pair of shoes.

"It is amazingly cheap," said Hafiz. "I could not think of taking advantage of so profoundly learned a workman, simply because I am a stranger. I must pay you two ducats."

He paid the shoemaker two ducats, thanked him profusely and left with Sidi Abdulla. Everybody was convinced after this that the people of Jerusalem must be idiots. The next day Hafiz Ben broke the string of his other shoe and again he went to the shoemaker and paid two ducats for a new one. Sidi Abdulla could not refrain from expressing his astonishment.

"Shoes in Jerusalem," he said to Hafiz, "must be most costly, if you pay two ducats each for laces."

"They are indeed expensive in our city," Hafiz answered. "They sell for ten ducats a pair. It is seldom that they can be bought for so low a price as nine or eight ducats."

Sidi Abdulla remained silent and thoughtful for a few minutes. Then he said—

"If I bought shoes here and took them to Jerusalem to sell, I could make a fortune speedily?"

"Even so," answered Hafiz gravely. "You could amass fabulous wealth in less than a year."

"Of a truth I could," said Sidi Abdulla, eagerly. "I will do it."

"You are wise," said Hafiz. "Sir, you have been exceedingly kind to me during my brief stay here. I will help you when you come to Jerusalem with shoes."

Sidi Abdulla was delighted.

He bade an affectionate farewell to Hafiz, and determined to keep his great secret to himself.

"The fools of Jerusalem will pour gold into my coffers," he said to himself.

Quietly he set to work and spent nearly all his money on shoes of all sizes. He loaded them in huge bales on his camels and set sail with his caravan for Palestine. He sent one of his men on in advance to inform Hafiz Ben of his coming. Hafiz immediately called together the merchants who had attended the first meeting.

"My plan is proceeding excellently," he explained to them, and they were overjoyed to hear that Sidi Abdulla was coming.

"Now we shall be avenged for the insults he has heaped upon us," they said.

A procession of merchants was formed to the gate of the city by which Sidi Abdulla's caravan would enter. There they waited while Hafiz and two others went a little way out of the city to meet Sidi Abdulla.

"Greeting to you, Sidi Abdulla," said Hafiz, when they met the merchant of Athina. "All the people of Jerusalem are looking forward eagerly to your coming. We have been sent out to give you welcome and to inform of the rules of trading in our city."

"What are your rules?" asked Sidi Abdulla, very much impressed by this deputation of welcome.

"They are but two," replied Hafiz, "wherefore have I two companions with me. One is a barber, the other a painter."

"Why these people?" asked Sidi Abdulla, in surprise.

"It is enacted by the laws of the great city of Jerusalem," said Hafiz, drawing forth from his robe a long scroll and reading it, "that whosoever cometh from an outside city to trade

with us here, must first have his head shaved and his face painted black."

"It is a strange rule," said Sidi Abdulla, in astonishment.

"It is the law, Clause III, Section 89, subsection 302," Hafiz answered, reading from the scroll. "You would not have us break our laws, would you? We impose no duty on merchandise, and your profits will be great."

Sidi Abdulla looked at the shoes of the two men with Hafiz. They were extremely shabby. The men had put on their oldest and most torn shoes purposely.

"So be it," he said, and while he sat on the ground, one man shaved him and the other painted his face black with sticky paint.

"It feels uncomfortable," muttered Sidi Abdulla to himself, "and my appearance must be ridiculous. But what matters it. I shall amass wealth by my large profits from these idiots."

A great crowd waited for the caravan at the city's gate, and when Sidi Abdulla, with his black face and shaven head, entered, a huge shout went up. He thought it was a cheer of welcome, so he bowed repeatedly to the people as he marched at the head of his caravan to the

market place. Everybody knew, because of his black face, that he was the man who had insulted the city, and he looked so funny that even the children and the beggars laughed heartily. Sidi Abdulla was, however, too busy thinking of his profits to take any notice, and as soon as he got to the market place, he unpacked his shoes.

There were hundreds of them, of all shapes, colours and sizes, and he spread them out on the ground, while many people gathered round.

"I bring you cheap shoes, noble people of Jerusalem," he cried loudly. "I bring you beautiful shoes of exquisite workmanship. Never before have you seen such splendour in footwear, never in the history of your holy, sacred and beautiful city, have shoes been sold so cheaply as I shall sell them to you."

"What is the price?" asked several people.

"Nine ducats a pair," said Sidi Abdulla.

But the people laughed so loudly that he could scarcely make himself heard.

"What did you say, black face?" he was asked again.

"Repeat your words of wisdom, shaven crown," cried others.

"I said nine ducats a pair," shouted Sidi

Abdulla, " but I shall certainly not sell for less than eight."

" Take them home," cried the people. " We have never paid more than a ducat a pair."

" What ! " screamed Sidi Abdulla, in great astonishment.

" Take them home while you have the opportunity," said several people, picking up shoes.

" I will sell for seven ducats a pair, for six," cried poor Sidi. He was getting very hot with excitement, and the perspiration on his face was melting the black paint which began to run in streaks down his cheeks.

" We will not have them at any price, you fool of Athina," shouted one man, and he flung a shoe at Sidi Abdulla.

" Fool of Athina," cried the others, and everyone seized a shoe to fling at the poor merchant.

" Stop, stop," he screamed. " Five ducats, four ducats——"

But the shoes began to rain fast on him, and fearing that he would be seriously injured, he commenced to run towards the gate by which he had entered. Through the streets the crowd followed, pelting him with his own shoes. At the gates of the city he saw Hafiz Ben.

"Save, save me," he cried piteously.

"Once outside the gates you are safe," said Hafiz. "The people will not follow you outside the city. When next you visit a strange place, you will not poke fun at it."

Bruised, footsore and weary, Sidi Abdulla set off for Athina, realizing that he had been well punished for his folly.

SLY FOX AND SLY FISH

Sly Fox and Sly Fish

SLY fox was hungry. All day long he had wandered about and had been unable to find anything to eat. No matter how cunning he was that day, everybody seemed to see him coming and took warning. All the farmers carefully locked up their chickens and got big sticks ready, and everybody gave everybody else warning. Even the foolish ducklings were on their guard.

"Quack, quack," came the warning cry as soon as he was sighted, and they hastily swam over to the other side of the stream in which they were so that he could not follow.

At last sly fox noticed a plank bridge across

the stream and he dashed across to the other side, but old mother duck saw him and hastily entered the water again with her family. Sly fox dashed back again, but got tired of running backwards and forwards across the plank. The ducks were always too quick for him, and finally they remained in the water altogether, moving up and down in the middle of the stream. Sometimes they came near, said "Quack, quack," defiantly, and then swam away again.

Tired, exhausted and hungry, sly fox laid down on the plank bridge to think. He pretended to be asleep, but kept one eye open. The ducks, however, were wary, and sly fox began to make up his mind to go without duck that day.

"After all," he muttered to himself, "I don't think I am really fond of duck."

A fish leaped out of the water a few feet away, and sly fox was quickly on the alert.

"Why should I not have fish to-day?" he asked himself.

Another fish leaped out of the stream and fell back again, and sly fox peered into the water to see what was the matter. All the fishes were hurrying to and fro in great alarm.

"Why are you excited, my good friends?"

he asked. "Such beautiful creatures as you are should be able to live in happiness and peace."

Even fishes like to hear pretty compliments, and when sly fox spoke so kindly to them and called them beautiful creatures, they stopped to listen.

"Ah, I have made a good impression," thought sly fox, "I must flatter them a little more. Then I will have fish for supper to-day."

"I have never seen such beautiful slender bodies as yours," he said aloud, "and never have I seen any creature move so gracefully as you. You have no legs to grow tired, and you have not to walk over the hot, dusty roads where the sharp stones scratch you. Happy, happy fishes. How I envy you! How I wish I could lie in the cool water like you."

"We are not so happy as you think," said one of the fishes.

"Is that possible?" said sly fox.

"It is indeed," was the reply. "Just now we are all agitated, because some fishermen are trying to tempt us with hooks on which they put worms. Then they put nets in the water to catch us."

"Cruel, cruel men, to torture such beautiful creatures as you are," said the fox. "How

I feel sorry for you. Will you listen to my advice ? "

" If it is good," replied the fishes.

" My advice is always good," replied the fox ; " you know that I am the cleverest of all the animals."

" We have heard that you are cunning," replied the fishes. " Sometimes we hear the fishermen talk."

Sly fox was annoyed.

" And do you believe what the fishermen say ? " he asked. " Do you not know that they are your greatest enemies ? "

" That is so," they answered ; " we have no peace from them. They try to catch us even at night."

" Why, then, do you remain in the water where you are not secure ? " asked sly fox. " Come with me and I will show you a beautiful hiding-place under the ground. There you will be able to find lots of worms without the fear that they are stuck on hooks to catch you. There you will be secure against all the snares of the fishermen."

" No doubt," replied the fishes, " but shall we be secure against you ? "

" Have I not told you I am your friend ? " replied sly fox. " Come with me and we shall

dwell together and in peace as did our ancestors in the long, long ago."

"No, thank you," returned the fishes. "We see now that your cleverness is but cunning, and your wisdom only folly. If we are insecure in our natural element, the water, how much more dangerous will be our lot in a hole underground where we canont swim and where we cannot run because we have no legs. No, thank you, sly fox, you shall not have fish for supper to-night."

The fishes swam away to tell the ducks, and the birds annoyed sly fox by going as near to him as they dared and impudently calling, "Quack, quack."

Poor sly fox slunk home, and went to bed hungry that night.

THE PRINCESS AND THE RABBI

The Princess and the Rabbi

IT was a great day in the poor Jewish quarter of Rome. The narrow streets of the Ghetto were gaily decorated. Everybody hung coloured flags from their windows and in festoons across the streets. Those who could not afford to buy flags, and most of the people were too poor to do so, hung out coloured cloths, blankets, carpets and even table-cloths. The general desire was to make the dark miserable streets of the Ghetto gay with bright colours, and in this the people succeeded. Never had the squalid alleys looked so beautiful, and those who were not compelled to live in the Ghetto all their lives, as the Jews were, came to the gates of the quarter to see the wonderful sight.

The decorations were prepared for the visit of the Princess. Never before had a Royal personage visited the Jewish part of the city, and the Jews, although sorely oppressed by the Romans, were anxious to give every proof of their loyalty and their love of peace. All who had holiday clothes put them on for the day, and everybody who could possibly afford it, purchased some piece of ribbon, or lace, with which to decorate their clothes. In short, everybody tried to look their very best, and to make their dingy dwellings appear as bright and as handsome as palaces.

All the elders of the community and the Rabbis in their festival robes awaited the Princess at the gates of the Ghetto. They were accompanied by the choirs of the synagogues, also in their festival robes, and when the Princess approached, they raised loud " Hurrahs ! " and sang a beautiful song of welcome.

Slowly, the beautiful, but proud and haughty Princess came along in her chariot richly ornamented with gold, and drawn by four white horses, caparisoned with crimson and silver trappings. When the song of welcome ceased and the chariot halted at the Ghetto gates, the Princess descended. The Rabbis moved forward in a procession to bid her welcome. At

their head was the famous Rabbi Joshua ben Chananjah. He was not a tall man of dignified bearing. Unfortunately he was misshapen and had a humpback, and as he bowed low before the Princess, she could not help but smile.

"What a grotesque-looking creature," she remarked to her attendants, and they also smiled.

A spasm of pain made the Rabbi's face twitch when he heard these cruel words, but he took no notice, and calmly went on to deliver his address of welcome. He remained by the Princess's side while she walked through two or three of the principal streets of the Ghetto. Everywhere the people greeted Her Royal Highness with the greatest enthusiasm, and the humpback Rabbi answered all her questions so promptly and with such courtesy and wit and wisdom that the Princess could not help but admire him. But every time he bowed to her, she noticed his misshapen back, and when at length he escorted her back to her waiting chariot at the Ghetto gates, she said to her attendants—

"That Rabbi is a rich kernel of wisdom in an ugly shell."

Again the Rabbi's face bore a look of pain, and the Princess noticing it, said haughtily—

"O wise man of the Jews, give me, I pray you, ere I leave your hospitable Ghetto, some words of wisdom and advice with which to remember you."

"It shall be as Your Royal Highness graciously commands," said the Rabbi, bowing as low as he possibly could, so that she should see his hump again. "Tell me," he added, "where does your Royal father, the august Emperor, on whom be peace, keep his choicest wines?"

"It is a strange question," said the Princess.

"But peradventure, I am no ordinary man, Your Royal Highness," answered the Rabbi, with a twinkle in his eye; "so, gracious Princess, I pray you answer it."

"My Royal father's choicest wines," she replied, somewhat amused, "are kept in the Royal cellars."

"Dark, underground chambers?" asked the Rabbi.

"Even so," replied the Princess.

"And in what vessels, gracious Princess?" the Rabbi asked again.

"In earthenware vessels," answered the Princess.

"Strange, exceeding strange," said the Rabbi musingly, "that the choicest vintages of the world, selected to grace a great and mighty

Emperor's table, should be kept in jars of common earth and in an underground cellar."

"And how then should my Royal father's wines be kept?" asked the Princess, in surprise.

"Gracious Princess," replied the Rabbi, again bowing very low and letting her see his hump for a few seconds, "should not the wines of an Emperor be kept in casks and vessels of gold in a beauteous chamber suffused with the rays of the sun?"

The Princess seemed bewildered for a few minutes.

"Holy man of Israel," she said at length, 'thou art possessed of wisdom rare, and perhaps thou art right. It shall please my Royal whim to consider your unusual proposal. Farewell."

As soon as the Princess reached the Palace, she summoned the head butler before her.

"Take a dozen slaves," she said, "and bid them empty the wines in the earthen jars in the Royal cellars into vessels of gold and place them in the Royal gardens in the sun."

"But, Your Royal Highness——" said the butler, opening wide his eyes in astonishment.

"Silence, slave!" commanded the Princess. "Perform my bidding, or your life shall be forfeit."

Without another word, the head butler hurriedly left and had the Princess's orders carried out. Everybody in the Palace wondered when they saw the rich red wines poured into big golden jugs which were ranged in rows in the gardens.

A week later the Princess gave a banquet to a large number of guests. When they wer all assembled, she said—

"I bid you welcome. I have prepared a great surprise for you. It is wine of a new vintage."

All were eager to see and taste the wines, and when they were placed upon the table, everybody admired the big golden jugs and hastened to fill their goblets.

"To Her Royal Highness, the gracious and the beautiful Princess," they cried, and then all put the goblets to their lips.

The next moment they put down their goblets hastily and all made wry faces. One or two, indeed, began to splutter, and one old man jumped up and left the table.

"What means this unseemly conduct?" cried the Princess in a great rage. "Is this how you behave at the Royal table and in honour of the toast of the daughter of your Emperor?"

For a few moments nobody answered, but all continued to make wry faces, and one or

two could not stop spluttering and coughing

"You, sirrah!" cried the Princess to a man who was still spluttering near her, "you shall tell me the meaning of this, or your life shall be forfeit."

Instantly the man ceased to splutter.

"Your Royal Highness," he said slowly, "there must be some mistake. This is not wine, but vinegar."

"Vinegar!" exclaimed the Princess. "How dare you? How dare you insult your Royal master's choicest wine. Guards, seize him. He shall be cast to the lions and torn limb from limb for this."

A great silence fell upon the guests and they stared at the Princess in horror. One of the oldest, a grey-haired officer of the guards, rose at the other end of the table.

"Gracious Princess," he began, "give me leave to speak, ere your dread command be obeyed. I am an old soldier; I fought by your father's side in the great wars ere yet you were born, and in your childhood's days oft did I dandle you on my knee. I, too, have tasted of this wine. It is strange, but it is scarce like wine. Indeed its taste is more like that of vinegar—bad vinegar, gracious Princess."

The Princess looked from one to the other of

her guests in blank amazement. Then slowly, defiantly almost, she raised her goblet to her lips. All present held their breath. The Princess took a tiny sip from her goblet. Then she put it down slowly and tried to keep a straight face. She tried to speak, but for a few moments could not.

"My guests," she said at last, in a husky voice, "I crave your pardon. This wine is sour. It is bewitched and has a taste that cannot be good for human beings. I crave your pardon and will severely punish the knave who is responsible for this."

"Know you who he is?" asked the grey-haired officer.

"The hunchback Rabbi of the Jews," was the answer. "Bid your guards fetch him hither on the instant. And, my guests, I crave your permission to retire awhile. This vile drink has made me ill."

All the others were ill, too, for they had each taken a big drink of the sour wine, and while the guards marched to the Ghetto to bring back Rabbi Joshua ben Chananjah, the doctors of the Palace were very busy. Everybody had to swallow some nasty medicine, and one of the guests was so ill that it was thought he was poisoned, and he was sent home lying down

in a chariot. In the streets the people who saw him pass thought he was drunk, and they jeered at him and threw stones.

Very soon Rabbi Joshua ben Chananjah arrived, guarded by a dozen stalwart soldiers. A dozen others had to be left behind at the Ghetto gates which they locked. The Jews were astounded when the soldiers arrived to arrest their beloved Rabbi, and they would have followed the soldiers to the Palace, but they were not allowed out of the Ghetto and soldiers guarded the gates.

Rabbi Joshua was brought before the Princess and her guests. He looked round in great astonishment. Everybody had a white face. They all seemed ill. When he saw the Princess, he bowed very low and kept his head down, until she said—

"Raise your head. You would not have me gaze upon your humpback for ever?"

"If it pleases Your Royal Highness to do so," he answered.

"It pleases me not," she said haughtily. "Know you, wise and ungainly man of Israel, why it is you have been brought hither?"

Rabbi Joshua looked round the banqueting chamber and saw the half-filled goblets of wine.

"Yes, I know," he said, again bowing his head.

"Stop, stop," the Princess cried. "Do not bow before me again. I have seen enough and too much of your hump. How do you know why I have sent for you? Are you a magician?"

"We Jews practise not the black arts," he replied. "We apply the teachings of our forefathers, our prophets and our Rabbis, to all things."

"And by that means you read the secrets that are not open to others?"

"It is not difficult to read what Your Royal Highness calls secrets," he replied. "I perceive here a banquet hastily finished, goblets of wine left half-filled, and your guests standing round with white, frightened faces. They are not well. They have partaken of something which disagrees with them—wine perhaps."

"Truly art thou wisdom in an ungainly shell," answered the Princess; "but does your wisdom warn you that you have incurred my grave displeasure?"

"No," was the prompt reply, which surprised everybody.

"You suggested that the Royal wines should be taken from the earthen jars in the cellar and placed in golden vessels in the sun, wise man of Israel," went on the Princess, in tones of dis-

pleasure; "knew you, then, that the wines would turn sour and be unfit to drink?"

"I did, gracious Princess," answered the Rabbi.

"Was not that folly, instead of wisdom?"

"Not so."

"Why?" inquired the Princess.

"Gracious Princess," replied the Rabbi, "we are as the good God made us, and not all the things that are in outward appearance the most beautiful are the best. These golden vessels of yours are of exquisite beauty; compared with them the earthen jars of your cellars are coarse and ugly. But they are the best in which to keep your choicest wines pure and good."

"Then why did you advise me to put the wine into golden jugs?" demanded the Princess angrily.

"Your Royal Highness," replied the Rabbi, "it was but an answer to your mockery of me when you did laugh at my ungainly figure and even at my learning and say it was but wisdom in an ugly shell. Gracious Princess, I am but an earthen jar among mortals——"

"And I the golden jug in which the wine of wisdom has turned sour," said the Princess, with bowed head.

All present were silent, and they trembled

as they saw the Princess rise from her luxurious couch. All expected her to summon the guards and order them to take the daring Rabbi to the place of execution. But she took him by the hand and said to her guests—

"Bow your heads, all of you, to this man of learning and wisdom, for he has taught me a lesson I shall never forget."

"'Bow your heads,' said the Princess, 'to this man of learning and wisdom, for he has taught me a lesson I shall never forget.'"

YUSSUF'S THREE PUNISHMENTS

Yussuf's Three Punishments

USSUF was the servant of a wealthy Jew and always pretended to be most faithful in the performance of his duties.

"I do not rob my master, as is the practice of other servants," he said, not once but many times.

At last his master became suspicious.

"I am beginning to doubt Yussuf's honesty," he remarked to a friend. "He talks too much of it. The man who is really honest does not constantly say so to everybody. He proves it by his actions."

"That is true," replied his friend; "therefore you must put your servant to the test. I have heard it said that he is a rich man, and that he

charges you double for everything which you send him to buy."

"That is my fear," said Yussuf's master. "I know that nothing which he purchases for me is cheap. But tell me, my friend, how to put a stop to the deceit and dishonesty."

His friend thought the matter over, and then said he had a good plan.

"I have a friend who is a fishmonger," he said. "Let us go to him and select some fish. Then send your servant to purchase the fish, and tell the dealer to sell him only that which you have selected. Then you will discover whether Yussuf charges you more than the price for which you will have bargained with the fishmonger."

"It is excellent advice," said Yussuf's master; "I will put it to the test at once."

They went to the shop of Ali, the fishmonger, and selected three fine fish for which the dealer said the price was ten pieces of silver.

"That is a large sum of money for three fishes," said Yussuf's master.

"Not so," returned Ali. "They are fresh fish, taken from the water this morning only. I have the same fishes but not so fresh, and I care not to sell them. If you care to have them, you may for five pieces of silver."

He brought the fish for them to see, and they could scarcely tell the difference.

"This gives me an idea," said Yussuf's master. "I will send my servant and tell him I desire this particular kind of fish. If he is honest, he will bring the fresh fish. If not, he will bring the other and charge me the higher price."

It was arranged with Ali that he should show Yussuf both kinds of fishes and then forward a note saying which were purchased. Yussuf, when his master returned home, was sent to the shop to get the particular kind of fish which his master said he liked.

"Get them good and fresh," he was told. "You know I care only for the best, no matter what the price."

Yussuf salaamed before his master and immediately hurried off to the shop.

"What is the price of those three fishes, friend Ali?" he said, pointing to the kind described by his master.

"Ten pieces of silver," was the answer.

"Nonsense, rascal," said Yussuf. "Dost wish to ruin so excellent a man as my good and faithful master?"

"Certainly not," returned Ali, "but I could not offer you anything that was not of the best.

I have here three fishes exactly like these in appearance, dut they are not fresh, and I would not sell them for your master."

"Did I say they were for my master's dinner?" said Yussuf slily. "They are but for the servants, and the fish which are not fresh will do. Name your price."

"Five pieces of silver."

"I will take them," was Yussuf's answer. "Five silver pieces is enough for an honest servant to allow his most excellent master to spend on the lazy rascals of the household who are not faithful."

When he brought the fish home, his master said they were the ones that he saw, and he gave orders that they should be prepared for his meal at once.

"Yes, they are excellent fish," said Yussuf. "The rascal, Ali, wished me to pay twelve silver pieces, but I know their value, and I made him let me have them for ten. I saved you two silver pieces."

"Splendid, splendid," murmured his master.

In a few minutes, however, Ali's messenger brought a note which stated that Yussuf had bought the three fishes for five silver pieces. His master flew into a rage, and would immediately have whipped and dismissed Yussuf, but

his friend, who was with him, told him not to be so hasty.

"You must teach him a lesson once and for all," and he unfolded a plan which made them both laugh very heartily.

Yussuf soon brought the cooked fish on a dish and set it before his master.

"Now that they are cooked," said the latter, "they do not seem to be fresh. I have no desire to be made ill."

"They are quite fresh I assure you on my honour as a faithful and honest servant," replied Yussuf.

"Your honour, you thief!" cried his master, in a rage. "Now have I found you out. I have here a note from Ali telling me that he sold you the fish that was not fresh for five silver pieces."

"He is a dishonest rascal," retorted Yussuf.

"Have a care," said his master. "Speak the truth and I will forgive you. But if you persist in your lie, you shall be punished thrice."

"I never speak aught but the truth to thee, my master," replied Yussuf.

"Enough," cried his master. "I see that you are an adept at roguery. Choose your punishment, and choose carefully. Eat this wretched fish, or receive 100 lashes with the whip, or pay me 100 pieces of silver."

"A hundred pieces of silver!" cried Yussuf, holding up his hands in astonishment. "I am but a servant, not a rich man. And 100 lashes with the whip would kill me."

"Then you will eat the bad fish?" said his master.

"If, indeed, I must be punished."

"Sit down and eat."

Yussuf did so, but after he had eaten one fish, he said he could not eat the others.

"They will make me ill and I shall die," he said tearfully.

"Then will you have the hundred lashes?" his master asked.

"I have not a hundred pieces of silver," said Yussuf, hanging his head.

Another servant with a leathern whip was called and ordered to give Yussuf a hundred lashes. The poor fellow howled with terror and pain, and when fifty of the stripes had been given, he cried—

"Enough, enough. Stop, stop! I will confess. I have been dishonest and faithless. I will pay the hundred pieces of silver."

He brought them from the hiding-place where he had put them and handed them to his master.

"It is all the money I have stolen from you," he said.

"Let this be a warning to you to be honest in future," replied his master. "You see now that dishonesty did not pay. I warned you that if you failed to speak the truth, you would be thrice punished. You have eaten of the bad fish, you have had half of the hundred lashes, and you have had to pay me all the 100 silver pieces."

KING TONGUE

King Tongue

THE King of Persia was very ill, and all the remedies of his doctors had no effect on him whatever. At last he grew impatient with them and summoned all his physicians before him.

"Where is your boasted skill?" he asked. "For months now have I lain on this bed of sickness. I am weary with lying here, I feel like a helpless and wounded beast left alone in the fastness of the forest. Be heedful. If your medicines have no effect upon me within a week, you shall pay forfeit with your lives. Not one of you shall live."

"We have done our best," said one of the physicians, in a trembling voice, "but your illness is so unusual."

"What matters that," cried the King in a rage. "Are ye not unusual men—physicians?"

"Sire," said one of the young physicians coming forward, "'tis my belief that your Majesty is not ill, but bewitched."

"Then must you remove the spell that is over me; I command it," returned the King. "Are not physicians magicians of the art of healing?"

"Truly so, sire," answered the young physician, "and with your leave we will cure you. But it will not be easy."

"What mean you?" questioned the King, in surprise. "What difficulties can be placed in the way of the desires of the ruler of Persia?"

"But listen, your Majesty," returned the physician. "It is a fairy cure which I suggest for your strange illness. Your Majesty must drink the milk of a lioness—if it can be obtained."

"So that is the difficulty," said the King thoughtfully. "Are there no brave men in Persia who will undertake this great task?"

"I will undertake it, gracious Majesty," said a young officer of the guards standing by the Throne.

"You are a brave man," said the King,

glancing with admiration at the handsome and sturdy young officer who stood before him. "If successful you shall not go unrewarded. Should you fail, your courage shall not be forgotten."

The officer knelt at the feet of the King, kissed the hem of his royal robe, and immediately started on his dangerous mission.

"Be heedful," whispered the young physician to him. "The fairies give not their remedies to human beings easily. They may lead you into greater danger than the lioness from whom you must obtain the milk. Above all, drink not of the milk yourself."

"Fear not for me," laughed the young officer. "The life of my King is at stake. Why should I think of dangers? They are made but to be overcome by those who have daring."

Carefully selecting his weapons and his followers, the young officer started off, taking with him half a dozen sheep. All the people followed him to the gates of the city to wish him success.

The young officer and his men plunged immediately into a dense forest infested with wild animals of all kinds. They had to proceed cautiously, and they were instructed to take

the life of no beast. At night they built a big fire to keep away the animals, and half of the party kept watch, while the other half slept. Towards early morning, the roaring of a lion was heard and the officer was quickly awakened. Selecting half a dozen men and taking two sheep and a strong net, he crept slowly through the tangled undergrowth of the forest in the direction of the roaring.

Soon they came to a clearing where a lion was struggling with an antelope. In a few minutes the struggle ceased and the lion commenced to feed on his prey.

"He will take some food to his partner, the lioness," said the officer. "Then we shall follow."

But the lion was evidently very hungry and devoured the whole of the antelope. Then he laid down to sleep. It was now nearly daylight, and the young officer was puzzled what to do. Suddenly a noise was heard, and a huge yellow body was seen creeping through the long jungle grasses. It was a lioness. She was followed by three tiny cubs.

"Quick, a sheep," exclaimed the officer, and a poor lamb was tied to a long rope and pushed out of the grass into the clearing. It was some minutes before the lioness saw the sheep, and

then with an angry roar she sprang upon it and killed it with a blow. Seizing it in her mouth, she was about to carry it off, but the officer, who had crept as near as he dared, suddenly flung his net with unerring aim. It caught the lioness's head and her two fore feet. Finding herself entangled, she turned towards the officer, but just then one of his men flung another net which caught her hind legs. The ropes were tightened quickly, and in a few moments the huge beast lay helpless on the ground.

"Two of you go and kill the lion while he sleeps," said the officer. "One of you run back to the camp and bring the other men and all the ropes we have. Our work is not yet half done."

Half a dozen more men soon appeared from the camp, and stealthily approaching the struggling lioness, they threw more nets round her. One of them then went quite near and deftly slipped a noose round her fore legs and another round her hind legs. The other ends of these ropes they tied to trees to make the lioness lie still. She was still dangerous, however, for she had bitten the net about her mouth and she snarled and roared fearfully. Taking the dead sheep, the officer stuck it on a spear and thrust it into the lioness's open mouth. He ordered

one of the men to hold it there, and then he proceeded to try and milk the animal. She still struggled, and half the milk was spilt, but he managed to fill four leathern bottles.

"Let us leave the lioness as she is," he said. "It would not be fair to kill her after she has been of such use to us. She will free herself in time. We shall not kill the cubs either. They seem frightened, poor things. Let us take one. The mother will be able to attend to the other two in a few hours."

With the precious milk carefully guarded, the hunters began their return. But the men were tired, and when the sun rose and shone fiercely, they could scarcely walk.

"I, too, feel tired," said the officer, at last. "Let us sleep for a while and then continue our journey when the sun is less strong in the afternoon."

The men were very grateful for this, and in a few moments nearly all of them were fast asleep in the shade of a big banyan tree. Only the officer and one who was ordered to keep guard were awake.

"It is strange that I cannot sleep, although I am so tired," mused the officer. "Perhaps I ought not to sleep, but ought to get back to the Palace as quickly as possible."

He looked at the leathern bottles containing the lioness's milk.

"I wonder what it tastes like," he said, opening one. "I suppose I ought to take every drop to the King. But I should just like to taste it. Let me see, did not the physician warn me that I must not taste it? I wonder why. Perhaps it is for kings only. Perhaps it will make me a king. He said there was magic in it. I will taste it."

He put the bottle to his lips and then quickly put it down.

"How strange," he said. "If I did not know that this was the milk of a lioness, I should say it was like strong wine. It has made me feel quite drowsy."

The next minute the officer's head fell heavily to the ground. He was fast asleep.

In his sleep, the officer had a strange dream. Every part of his body seemed to have got separated, and all the parts were quarrelling.

"We deserve all the credit," said the two legs, proudly standing up. "We carried the officer to the place where the lioness was. Without us he could have done nothing."

"Don't talk nonsense," said the hands, shaking themselves menacingly. "We threw the net that entangled the lioness. Then we

milked the beast. It is we who deserve all the credit."

"Both of you are wrong," said the eyes, blinking, as if they could not keep themselves awake. "We saw the lioness, and we directed your footsteps, feet, and your movements, hands."

The feet looked like getting ready to kick, one of the hands clenched itself into a fist, and it appeared as if a fight was inevitable.

"Listen to me," said the heart in a throbbing voice. "You all claim too much. After all it was I who inspired the idea. Had it not been for me, the impulse would never have entered the officer's mind to undertake the task."

"Which reminds me," said the mind thoughtfully, "that I deserve the most credit. It is one thing to get hold of an impulse, but it is another to put it into force. I made up the officer's mind and made him suggest that he would get the milk. Is it not so?"

The legs, the hands, the eyes and the heart seemed abashed for a moment, and the tongue took advantage of the silence to burst out with the remark that he was chiefly responsible for the great enterprise.

"Rubbish!" exclaimed the others angrily.

" You don't know what you are talking about. You wag because you can't help it. You stop in your little prison, the mouth, or we shall tell our friends the teeth to bite you."

The tongue thrust itself out very pointedly.

" Just you be careful," it said. " You are all very clever, and I am a prisoner, of course. But I warn you not to offend me. If I take my revenge, you will all get hurt. And then you will see that I am more important than all of you."

" Don't talk so much," retorted the others, but before another word could be said, the officer showed signs of waking, and the hands and feet and the other parts of the body took their proper places.

" What a funny dream ! " exclaimed the officer, waking up. " And oh ! how my head does ache. I ought not to have tasted that milk."

When he got up he found that he could not walk quite steadily and the journey to the city took longer than he expected. A great crowd awaited him at the gates. They cheered him, they carried him shoulder high, they decorated the city and in every way manifested their great joy.

" Our King will soon be well again thanks to

the brave officer," they cried, and a public holiday was proclaimed.

The officer was brought before the King, holding the leathern bottles containing the milk in his hand.

"Have you succeeded?" inquired the King anxiously.

The officer seemed dazed and unsteady. He pressed his hands to his head; then suddenly holding out the bottles he said, huskily—

"Here, your Majesty, I have brought—I have brought your Majesty the milk of the dog."

"The dog! What mean you, slave?" cried the King in a rage.

"I don't know," replied the officer unsteadily.

"Cast the slave into a dungeon cell and bind him with strong chains," cried the King. "I will teach him to play such pranks with me."

His attendants obeyed, and the officer was put in irons and locked in a dark prison cell.

"I will surely be put to death," he said to himself, and at the thought of this, he trembled all over.

Then it seemed to him that his hands and feet were talking again.

"We shall have to walk to the scaffold," said the feet.

"And I shall have to stop beating," said the heart.

The tongue, however, was not sorrowful at all.

"Did I not warn you all?" it said. "I told you to be careful. Will you not admit now that I have more power than all of you? I am king of the body. Just see what I have done with one little word. I simply said 'dog' instead of 'lioness' and you are all imprisoned."

"Suppose we acknowledge your power," said the hands, "will you help us out of this great trouble?"

"Yes, I will," replied the tongue. "At least, I'll try hard. But you must all keep quiet."

This they agreed to do, and when the prisoner was brought before the King for sentence, the tongue asked for permission to say a few words. The request was granted, and then the tongue displayed all its powers of eloquence.

"Oh, mighty King, live for ever," it exclaimed, "and have mercy on me, thy slave who risked his life in thy service. Oh, mighty ruler of this great land, be thou truly great in all attributes of Majesty, and spare the life of him who thought not of his own in thy hour of need. I ask not for reward for my service; I

ask only that my life should be spared that I may devote it to thee."

"I have heard you patiently," returned the King sorrowfully, "and it grieves me to have to utter the dread sentence of death. But where has been your great service? Did you not bring dog's milk and not the milk of a lioness?"

"It is not so, gracious Majesty," the officer replied. "The milk is truly that of a lioness. Those who were with me can vouchsafe for that. I tasted it. That was my sin. For that I have been punished. It was like strong wine. It made me giddy, and in my eagerness to tell thee, my tongue played me false. It was but a slip, sire; the words 'dog' and 'lioness' are so much alike in Persian. Put the milk to the test. A dog, I swear, will not touch it, but will fly from its mere smell."

The King was thoughtful for a while. Then he ordered one of his dogs to be brought. A little of the milk was poured from one of the leathern bottles and put before the dog. No sooner did the animal put its nose to the saucer, however, than it gave a great growl of fear and fled quickly from the room.

"It is not dog's milk," said the physician who had suggested the milk of a lioness to the

King. "That is clear. But we can make an even better test. One of the men brought a lion cub back with him. Will your Majesty permit that this milk be offered to the cub?"

The cub was brought, and it lapped the milk very greedily.

"You are pardoned," said the King to the officer, "and for your bravery you shall be rewarded."

The milk of the lioness soon cured the King of his illness, and afterwards whenever the young officer laid down to sleep, he always imagined that he heard the tongue say to the other parts of the body—

"You see, I am King. I have great powers both for good and evil."

The officer guarded his tongue as well as his King after that, and he was promoted to be chief of the guard. In that high position he lived happily until the end of his days.

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